

REMARKS

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-20 are currently being prosecuted. Claims 1, 5, and 12-14 are amended. Claim 1 is independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider his rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the official file in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that the final rejection contains new grounds of rejection.

Drawings

The Official Draftsperson has not approved the formal drawings submitted by the Applicant. It is respectfully submitted that the drawings comply with the requirements of the USPTO. If the Official Draftsperson has any objections to the formal drawings, s/he is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned as soon as possible so that the appropriate action may be taken.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1-4 and 7-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Korhonen, WO 96/20121, in view of Keip (U.S. 5,921,739). Claims 5 and 12-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Korhonen in view of Kiep and in further view of Anderson (U.S. 5,492,067) and Suzuki et al. (U.S. 4,702,008). Claims 6, 15-17, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Korhonen in view of Kiep and in further view of Curran (U.S. 4,976,336).

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 of the present invention is amended to include a novel combination of elements not taught or suggested by any of the prior art cited by the Examiner. Specifically, the present invention as set forth in claim 1, as amended herein, is directed to an apparatus for handling stacked units of boards having a combination of elements including a plurality of lift elements (25, 26) serving to elevate and lower the lift units (23, 24).

The Examiner will note that the above combination of elements is fully supported by, e.g., FIG. 2 and page 5, lines 15-17, of the specification.

By contrast, a careful review of FIG. 6 of the cited Korhonen reference indicates that it merely discloses grabber elements (15), which essentially are frames, without any teaching or illustration of what lift elements, if any, are used to elevate and lower these grabber elements (15) or frames. The present invention, on the other hand, provides a specific teaching of lift elements (25, 26) serving to elevate and lower the lift units (23, 24).

Furthermore, none of the other references cited by the Examiner discloses the combination of elements contained in claim 1 of the present invention.

The Examiner will note that dependent claims 19 and 20 have been added to set forth additional novel features of the present invention.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 is in condition for allowance. Regarding claims 2-18, which stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), these claims are also allowable due to their dependence on allowable claim 1, as well as for the additional limitations contained therein. Accordingly, all claims of the present application should be deemed allowable, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under U.S.C. §103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of all of the claims are respectfully requested.

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

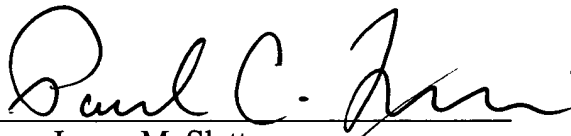
All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment
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MARKED-UP COPY OF AMENDED CLAIMS

1. (Twice amended) An apparatus for handling stacked units of boards, said apparatus comprising a stacker carrier (5) capable of moving a plurality of stacked units (2) placed on a support bed (4) in a storage area into storage stacks and off from said storage stacks, respectively, having lift units (23, 24) adapted to the opposite sides of said stacker carrier (5), said lift units being rotatably mounted on pivot shafts (39, 40) and individually movable and arranged to cooperate so as to elevate/lower the stacked units of boards resting on said support bed,

wherein the apparatus further comprises a plurality of lift elements (25, 26) serving to elevate and lower the lift units (23, 24).

5. (Thrice amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein each of said lift units (23, 24) is actuated by two drive shafts driving said plurality of lift [means] elements (25, 26), [such as] said plurality of lift elements being a plurality of lift chains, and [that] wherein said drive shafts are arranged to be driven by at least one drive unit (27) equipped with a variable-frequency inverter and an angular pulse encoder or a similar position transducer.

12. (Twice amended) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein each of said lift units (23, 24) is actuated by two drive shafts driving said plurality of lift [means] elements (25, 26), [such as lift chains], and said drive shafts are arranged to be driven by a drive unit

(27) equipped with a variable-frequency inverter and an angular pulse encoder or a similar position transducer.

13. (Twice amended) An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein each of said lift units (23, 24) is actuated by two drive shafts driving said plurality of lift [means] elements (25, 26), [such as lift chains,] and said drive shafts are arranged to be driven by a drive unit (27) equipped with a variable-frequency inverter and an angular pulse encoder or a similar position transducer.

14. (Twice amended) An apparatus according to claim 4, wherein each of said lift units (23,24) is actuated by two drive shafts driving said plurality of lift [means] elements (25,26), [such as lift chains,] and said drive shafts are arranged to be driven by a drive unit (27) equipped with a variable-frequency inverter and an angular pulse encoder or a similar position transducer.